

Remarks

This amendment is in response to the Office Action mailed September 30, 2003. Claim 1, Figs. 1-3, and the specification are being amended. In view of the above amendments and following remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of Claims 1-8.

In the Office Action, the drawings are objected to because a) in Fig. 1 link 13B is indicated as being between fastening means 12C & 12D but in the description on page 4, lines 35+, link 13B is described as extending between the fastening means 12B and 12C; b) Fig. 2 shows six links but only five are identified by reference numerals 13A, 13B, 13C, 13D, & 13E; and The "parallel faces" described on page 5, line 12 and recited in claim 8 are not identified by reference numeral(s).

With respect to the designation of link 13B in Fig. 1, as described in the specification, links 13A-13E interconnect the fastening means 12A-12F. (See page 5, line 38- page 6, line 1 of Applicant's disclosure) The links 13A-13E, such as shown in Fig. 2, are arranged in a stack with apertures at one of their respective ends in alignment to form the central part of the bore of a fastening means, such as fastening means 12B shown in Figs. 1 and 2. (See page 4, lines 31-33 of Applicant's disclosure) The opposite ends of the links 13A-13E are interleaved with other similar links extending between the adjacent fastening means, such as fastening means 12A and 12C. (See page 4, line 30 – page 5, line 3 of Applicant's disclosure) The links 13A-13E extend in opposite directions (i.e. a clockwise direction and a counter-clockwise direction) in an alternate sequence. (See page 4, lines 34-39) In other words, following the description in Applicant's disclosure on page 4, lines 34-37 with respect to fastening means 12B, links 13A, 13C, and 13E extend toward fastening means 12A in a counter-clockwise direction while links 13B and 13D extend toward fastening means 12C in the clockwise direction. As a result, when viewing the coupling in Fig. 1, link 13B shown between fastening means 12C and 12D is incorrect, and should be designated 13A. A proposed change to Fig. 1 marked in red changing reference number 13B to 13A is enclosed. Approval of this proposed change is respectfully requested.

In order to be more clear, a second reference number 13A is being added in Fig. 1 designating link 13A between fastening means 12A and 12B, as described in Applicant's

disclosure on page 4, lines 34-37. Likewise, reference number 13B is being added in Fig. 1 designating link 13B between fastening means 12B and 12C is being added, as described in Applicant's disclosure on page 4, lines 37 and 38. A correction to Fig. 2 is also being made to correctly designate link 13A with reference number 13A rather than link 13B. These proposed changes to Figs. 1 and 2 marked in red are enclosed. Approval of these proposed change is respectfully requested.

With respect to the unidentified link in Fig. 2, Applicant acknowledges that Fig. 2 shows six links but only five are identified by reference numerals. Applicant notes that the claims are not limited to a specific number of links, and that a plurality of links, as claimed in claim 1 of the present application, are designated with reference numbers. Accordingly, Applicant does not believe that designating all of the links with reference numbers is required. However, in order to overcome the objection to the drawings, Applicant's disclosure and Fig. 2 are being amended to designate the sixth link with reference number 13F. A proposed change to Fig. 2 marked in red adding reference number 13F is enclosed. Approval of this proposed change is respectfully requested.

Finally, reference number 23A and 23B are being added to Figs. 2 and 3 designating the parallel faces described on page 5, line 12 and recited in claim 8. A proposed change to Figs. 2 and 3 marked in red adding reference numbers 23A and 23B is enclosed. Approval of this proposed change is respectfully requested. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objections to the drawings is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, the disclosure is objected to because a) page 4, lines 28+ identifies five links, links 13A-13E, but Fig. 2 shows six links; and b) the description fails to comply with 37 CFR 1.74 because the "parallel faces" described on page 5, line 12 are not identified by reference numerals. As discussed above, Fig. 2 and the specification are being amended to include the sixth link as link 13F, and reference numerals 23A and 23B are being added to Figs. 2 and 3. In addition, Applicant's disclosure is being amended to include reference numerals 23A and 23B in the description. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objections to the disclosure is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claim 1 is objected to because some word(s) and/or punctuation appear to be needed in line 18 between the first two words in the line, "means" and "each".

Claim 1 is being amended to include the missing punctuation. Accordingly, withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claim 8 is objected to for reciting that each washer means 14A and 14B project from the body face of the annular body 11 when it is not clear what is the body face. As discussed above, the disclosure and Figs. 2 and 3 are being amended to clearly designate the body faces. Accordingly, withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claims 1-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement because the claims contain subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time of the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention. In particular, the Office Action asserts that the recitation of "said peripheral formation forming at least part of said peripheral edge" is not supported by the disclosure because the peripheral formation is formed on the middle (I.e. away from the edges) of the outer circumferential surface of the washer means. Recitations of a peripheral edge in claim 1 are being deleted. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-8 under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claims 1-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. In particular, the Office Action asserts that there is insufficient antecedent basis for "fastener means" in claims 1 and 2. Antecedent basis for "fastener means" in claims 1 and 2 was inadvertently deleted, and has been restored. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-8 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, Claims 1-3, 7, and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Andrä et al. (WO 99/15803). Andrä et al. discloses a coupling having an annular body 10 formed of a moldable material, parallel bores formed through the body, link means 12 passing around each bore, and a bushing 16 received in each bore. Collars 18, 19 extend radially outwardly from each bushing end. The Office Action asserts that the collars 18, 18' Andrä et al. satisfies the washer means limitation claimed in claim 1 of the present application and that the peripheral formations 30, 30' of Andrä et al. satisfies the peripheral

formations limitation in claim 1 of the present application. Applicant respectfully disagrees with these assertions.

The coupling in Andrä et al. is fundamentally different from the coupling claimed in the present application. In particular, as discussed below, the moldable material forming the body of Andrä et al. is disposed between collars engaging, or formed part of, a bushing. The collars position the bushing during vulcanization of the coupling body, and do not have peripheral formations that lock a washer means relative to the body. The invention claimed in the present application does not need a bushing, and includes washer means having peripheral formations that engage the moldable material to lock the washer means relative to the body formed by the moldable material. Accordingly, as discussed below, the structure of the coupling in Andrä et al. does not correspond to all of the limitations of claim 1 of the present application.

Claim 1, as amended above, includes the limitation of "washer means on opposite sides of said link means defining end orifices of each bore, each washer means having a peripheral formation, said peripheral formation engaging said moldable material such that when the body is molded to incorporate the fastener means and link means, each washer means is locked by the moldable material against displacement out of said body.

The collars 18, 18' of Andrä et al. project radially outwardly from bushing 14. The bushing 14 extends through a bore, or throughhole, formed in the coupling body 10. The bushing 14, not the collars 18, 18', defines the end orifices of the bore. Accordingly, even though the collars 18, 18' could be considered washer means because of their annular shape, the collars 18, 18' cannot be considered washer means defining end orifices of each bore, as required in claim 1 of the present application.

Even if collars 18, 18' could be considered washer means defining end orifices, the peripheral formations 30, 30' disclosed in Andrä et al. do not engage moldable material such that when the body is molded to incorporate the fastener means and link means, each washer means is locked by the moldable material against displacement out of the body. The peripheral formations 30, 30' of Andrä et al. are axially projecting abutment rings for positioning the coupling body 10 prepared for vulcanization in a vulcanization mold (See page 2, first paragraph, Certificate of Correction for U.S. Pat No. 6,315,670 (copy enclosed)

which corresponds to Andrä et al.). Moreover, because the abutment ring 30, 30' formed on each collar 18, 18' projects axially and engages the vulcanization mold during vulcanization, they cannot engage the moldable material such that when the body is molded to incorporate the fastener means and link means, each collar 18, 18' is locked by the moldable material against displacement out of the body.

The bushing 14 of Andrä et al. does define the end orifices of the bore, and could be considered washer means on opposite sides of said link means defining end orifices of each bore. However, the bushing 14 does not have a peripheral formation engaging the moldable material such that when the body is molded to incorporate the fastener means and link means, each washer means is locked by the moldable material against displacement out of the body. If the bushing 14 is considered a washer means, collar 18 and groove 24 could be considered peripheral formations of bushing 14. Neither collar 18 or groove 24, however, engage the moldable material such that when the body is molded to incorporate the fastener means and link means, the bushing 14 is locked by the moldable material against displacement out of the body. Collar 18 may engage the moldable material, however, it does not lock the bushing 14 against displacement out of the body since the bushing is free to slide axially (once any chemical bonds between the bushing and body are broken) in at least one direction. Groove 24 engages collar 18' and does not engage the moldable material. Therefore, when the body of Andrä et al. is vulcanized, there is no structure engaging the body of Andrä et al. that locks the bushing 14 against displacement out of the body. Accordingly, Andrä et al. does not disclose any structure that can be considered washer means having a peripheral formation, as claimed in claim 1 of the present application.

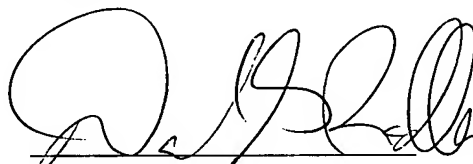
As discussed above, Andrä et al. does not disclose each and every element of claim 1 of the present application. Therefore, Andrä et al. cannot anticipate claim 1 of the present application. Claims 2, 3, 7, and 8 depend from claim 1. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-3, 7, and 8 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) for being anticipated by Andra et al. is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, Claims 4-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Andra et al. Claims 4-6 depend from 1 which is now believed allowable.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 4-6 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) for being unpatentable over Andra et al. is respectfully requested.

Claim 1 of the present application is being amended to overcome objections to the claims, as discussed above, and does not raise new issues. Claims 2-8 depend from claim 1. In addition, Figs. 1-3 and the specification are being amended to overcome the objections. In view of the above remarks and amendments to claim 1, Figs. 1-3, and the specification, Applicant respectfully requests approval of the proposed drawing changes and allowance of Claims 1-8. No additional fees for filing this response are believed to be due. However, if such fees are due, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge them to deposit account no. 17-0055.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel G. Radler', written over a horizontal line.

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